

**FROM THE PTO CO-PRESIDENTS**

**New and Noteworthy PTO Items**

**National Honor Society**

Congratulations to the 175 seniors who gathered in the auditorium on November 9 to be inducted into the National Honor Society. Membership in the NHS is a well-deserved recognition for years of hard work, academic achievement, and good citizenship, and all of these students and their parents can be proud of this accomplishment. The ceremony was followed by a reception in the atrium, organized and hosted by special events co-chairs Mimi Levine and JoAnn Winston and junior parents Aline Hillman, Joel Sklar, and Marsha Zierk. As we've come to expect from these parents, they put on a lovely spread with graciousness and apparent ease. Thank you all!

**Conversazione**

BHS graduate Stephen Kinzer will be the speaker at this year's *Conversazione*. We hope that you'll join us for this evening of coffee and conversation on Wednesday, December 9, at 7 p.m. in the atrium. Mr. Kinzer has been a foreign correspondent for most of his career and has written several books about U.S. foreign policy and about politics, government, and revolution in the places he's reported from. [See article on page 2.]

**PTO Calendar**

If you're looking for information about an upcoming event or meeting, visit the [calendar](#) on the PTO website. We've loaded it with all PTO meetings and events, all performances, and other school events along with SAT dates, vacation dates, holidays, and early-release dates. We update it regularly, but if

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**FROM THE HEADMASTER**

**Whatever It Takes**



Photo by Shelly Parris

The Brookline High "School Council" established one academic goal for this year based on the following reasoning: if we assume that intellectual gifts are distributed equitably across the human race, then the distribution of achievement *should* reflect that human race. For many reasons, it doesn't yet...either in Brookline or beyond it. The one academic goal for 2009–2010 is similar to the one established for the past four years. Brookline High remains committed to a multi-year comprehensive plan, in conjunction with the pre-K–12 Brookline Equity Project, "to improve achievement for all students and narrow the 'achievement gap' so that the achievement profile at Brookline High—measured by course enrollments, grades, standardized test scores, and post-secondary success—reflects the diversity of the student body."

Since we established this goal, we have nurtured proven programs and initiated a variety of new programs that directly respond to the goal. They include the African-American Scholars Program, the BHS Tutorial, Steps to Success, the Calculus Project, Opportunity for Change, and the Family Partnership. Along with the most fundamental strategy to improve achievement—excellent teaching in our classrooms for 180 days each school year—these programs are working. The data get better and better. More low-income students and students of color are taking—and succeeding in—higher-level courses. We are inducting more than 40% of our students into the National Honor Society (where the academic criterion is a 3.3 Grade Point Average), including increasing numbers of low-income students and students of color. MCAS scores are the highest in the history of our school, and the achievement gaps are narrowing. More low-income

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**BHS PTO NEWS & VIEWS**

Editors/Publishers: Jane Patrick and Ellen Mosner

Send comments to:  
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News & Views is also available from the PTO website, [www.bhs-pto.org](http://www.bhs-pto.org)

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you're looking for something that's not there, please let us know.

### Give a Little, Give a Lot

When you receive our annual end-of-the-year fundraising letter, please consider making a donation in whatever amount you can manage. It's been a tough year for all non-profits, and the BHS PTO is no exception. As of mid-November, we had raised about 26 percent less than we'd raised at the same time last year, with only about 16 percent of BHS families participating. If you've already given, thank you! If you haven't, please do! Along with hosting events like *Conversazione*, the teacher appreciation breakfast, and the college essay-writing workshop for seniors, we use your donations for grants to help teachers pay for equipment and supplies not covered by the school budget. Your support allows us to continue to make these grants.

Thank you for your generosity, and happy holidays!

—Adelaide Ketchum and  
Karen Hirsch  
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from the headmaster *continued*

students and students of color are attending and succeeding in college. This is very good news.

Yet the gaps are still there, and we will not be satisfied until the achievement profile of our school truly reflects the diversity of our student body. In Paul Tough's brilliant book, *Whatever It Takes* (the best book on children of poverty I've ever read), he paraphrases a question asked by Harlem Children's Zone founder Geoffrey Canada, "What would it take to change the lives of poor children, not one by one, through heroic interventions and occasional miracles, but in a programmatic, standardized way that could be applied broadly and replicated nationwide?" Canada recommends a comprehensive set of services, beginning with parents before their children are even born ("Baby College") and continuing through the student's experience in college.



Tough writes, "One fact stood out in all the academic research: the gap began when the children were very young." He identifies the most fundamental variable that affects intellectual development, "a child's experience of language," that is, number of vocabulary words, the richness of language, and the use of encouraging words by parents, "mattered more than socio-economic status, more than race, more than anything else" measured by researchers.

It seems clear that nothing less than a truly comprehensive approach—pre pre-K through post secondary—is needed if we are to achieve the democratic dream of public schooling: that every child will be well prepared and launched successfully into mainstream American and global society. It is very early in this conversation, but our school system, led by Bill Lupini, is beginning such a conversation on the establishment of a Brookline Children's Zone, modeled on the ideas of Geoffrey Canada, that would give us the best chance to achieve our educational dreams. It is exciting!

I encourage you to read *Whatever It Takes*. It is time for the Brookline Children's Zone!

—Bob Weintraub

## *Conversazione:* America's Role in the Middle East: A New Approach

Wednesday, December 9, 7 p.m.

Please join us for *Conversazione* with Stephen Kinzer, BHS graduate (1969), foreign correspondent, and author. Mr. Kinzer was a foreign correspondent for the *New York Times* and *Times* bureau chief in Nicaragua; Bonn, Germany; and Berlin. Kinzer has also written several books, the most recent of which are *A Thousand Hills: Rwanda's Rebirth and the Man Who Dreamed It* and *Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq*. For more information about Mr. Kinzer, go to his website, <http://www.stephenkinzer.com/>.

Following his talk, Mr. Kinzer will be signing copies of three of his books, which will be available for purchase: *Overthrow*, *All the Shah's Men*, and *Crescent and Star*.

Please let us know if you plan to attend, either by going to [http://bhs\\_conversazione2009.sign-up-sheet.com/](http://bhs_conversazione2009.sign-up-sheet.com/) or by calling or emailing Kelli McDermott at 617-713-5003, [kelli\\_mcdermott@brookline.k12.ma.us](mailto:kelli_mcdermott@brookline.k12.ma.us).

## BHS Art Teacher Recognized

Donna Sartanowicz has been named 2010 Massachusetts Art Education Association Secondary School Art Educator of the Year. She was honored at the annual Art Educators conference, held on November 14 at UMass-Dartmouth.

Donna was chosen based on the following criteria, set by the NAEA Awards Program:

- To recognize excellence in the many outstanding individuals, state/province associations, and programs of NAEA
- To focus professional attention on quality art education and exemplary art educators
- To increase public awareness of the importance of quality art education
- To set standards for quality art education and show how they can be achieved
- To provide tangible recognition of achievement, earn respect of colleagues, and enhance professional opportunities for NAEA members

Donna teaches drawing, painting, advanced drawing and painting, and the AP portfolio classes at BHS. She consistently engages students in a challenging curriculum that leads them to create compositional work that is expressive and personal. The students in her classes develop an artistic practice that embraces mistakes as part of the process, stretching their skills, techniques, and concepts. The students regularly use reflection to edit, revise, and rework ideas based on discoveries made while creating art work, all necessary habits of mind for success in their endeavors. Her classroom is a safe, comfortable space for students to explore their passions in visual arts, gain confidence in their artistic skills, and understand themselves as learners. Congratulations to Donna on this well-deserved honor.

—Alicia B. Mitchell  
K-12 Visual Arts Coordinator

 NEWS FROM THE  
Brookline Education Foundation

We all know what a difference an outstanding teacher makes. Let teachers know how grateful you are with your holiday gift to the Brookline Education Foundation in their names. Historically, 40% of BEF teacher grants are awarded to BHS teachers, and they are as proud as any teacher in Brookline when parents honor them with a donation to the BEF. Just give us a list of the educators you wish to honor, and we will take care of the rest.

And for those other people on your holiday lists, give the gift that keeps on giving—a BEF Raffle ticket for a Smart Car (or \$10,000). All proceeds support the important programs of the Brookline Education Foundation. For more information, please go to [www.BrooklineEducation.org](http://www.BrooklineEducation.org) or call 617-232-3846. Thank you and happy holidays!

FOLLOW US ON 

<http://twitter.com/BHSPTO>

## Masquerade:

### *The After-the-Prom Party Kickoff Party*



Throwing a kid's party is arguably the most enjoyable part of being a parent. Now use that creativity to help plan this big party in June. Decorators, painters, organizers, fundraisers, writers, whatever your talent...whether you can work the night of the party or become one of the regular decorating crew...we welcome everyone to join this fun and hardworking committee.

Check it out, bring a friend (or two) to the Kickoff Party on Thursday, January 21, 2010 at 7 p.m., at 73 Arlington Road, Chestnut Hill. For more information, directions, and/or to RSVP, contact Ann Devlin at [Ann\\_Devlin@hotmail.com](mailto:Ann_Devlin@hotmail.com).

Before the party, check out committee options at <http://bhsatpp2010.sign-up-sheet.com/>.

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## Performing Arts News

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November has been a very busy month as the Performing Arts Department kicked into high gear with a dynamite Wall Street-inspired production of *Macbeth*, the lively Camerata & Orchestra concert, the hot poppin' jazz of the Improvised Music Festival, and the always entertaining *Moonlighting*.

### Freshman Play Is *Lord of the Flies*

This year's annual Freshman Play is an update of Nobel Prize-winning author William Golding's classic, *Lord of the Flies*. It's a provocative story about a group of American students stranded on a deserted tropical island. Left to their own devices, they come together in survival mode, but as they try to govern themselves, primal instincts stir up their worst impulses. This powerful allegory is a searing indictment of the beast in all of us.

Dec. 9, 3:30 p.m.

Dec. 10 & 11, 7:30 p.m.

Dec. 12, 3:30 & 7:30 p.m.

BLACK BOX

Tickets \$5, free for teachers and 8th graders

### Brookline High School Winter Concert

The annual Winter Concert is the single best introduction to the wealth of music going on at BHS, and it's one of the liveliest concerts of the year to boot. Jazz Band, Orchestra, Camerata, Concert Choir, A Capella Choir, Concert Band—more than 200 of the school's finest. The concert will feature a wide repertoire, ranging from classical masterworks and jazz/pop tunes to original student compositions. This accessible family evening also offers Brookline's elementary students an inspiring glimpse of what they have to look forward to at BHS.

December 18, 7:30 p.m.

Roberts/Dubbs Auditorium

Tickets \$5, free to all elementary students

### BHS Musical Will Be *Blood Brothers*

Last year's musical director, Kyle Green, was offered a terrific opportunity in Arizona, so he's off to (ahem) "greener" pastures. But the Performing Arts department

has really lucked out in finding Nick Jacobson-Larson. Originally from Minnesota, he is the nephew of piano giant Leon Fleisher and recently directed Berklee College of Music's production of *The Light in the Piazza*. He is also working on his own original musical. For his first production at BHS, he's chosen Willy Russell's powerful *Blood Brothers*, a nature vs. nurture tale of twins separated at birth, one raised in an English family of great privilege and the other raised in poverty. Their friendship elicits both triumph and tragedy. Its 20-plus year production in London's West End makes it one of the longest-running works of musical theatre in history.

### Calling All Local Businesses

BHS' Friends of Performing Arts (FoPA) invites all local businesses to purchase an ad in the upcoming performing arts program book. This is a great opportunity to gain wider community visibility for your business and support the wealth of artistic offerings at BHS. For details, contact Herb Hough at [herbertehoughjr@cs.com](mailto:herbertehoughjr@cs.com).

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## BHS Professionals Develop

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“And as I sat there, brooding on the old, unknown world, I thought of Gatsby's wonder when he first picked out Daisy's light at the end of his dock. He had come such a long way to this blue lawn, and his dream must have seemed so close he could hardly fail to grasp it. But what he did not know was that it was already behind him, somewhere in the vast obscurity beyond the city, where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night.” —Nick Carroway, from *The Great Gatsby*

The BHS English department spent the system-wide Professional Development Day (November 3) discussing this passage and others like it from *The Great Gatsby*,

a core book for juniors. Tufts Professor Michael Downing led a lively discussion full of laughter, insight, and deepened appreciation for Fitzgerald's art. This was the department's third seminar with Michael, and we continue to be inspired by him as a scholar and as a teacher. BHS Assistant Headmaster and English teacher Hal Mason spoke for many when he observed, “I will say that, in 23 years of teaching, that was the best professional development I've attended.”

This seminar was made possible in part by a PTO grant that allowed us to purchase the books for these seminars. We would also like to extend our deep gratitude to BHS

parents Carl and Barbara Berke, who opened their home to us for the day, even feeding all of us breakfast.

Also, thank you to the PTO for another recent grant to the BHS English department (facilitated by teacher John Andrews). Because of this grant, we were able to stock each English classroom with a copy of *Book Lust*, a wonderful compendium of book titles for all kinds of readers with all sorts of interests. Teachers use this book to help students find books for outside reading and for senior papers.

As a department, we feel hugely supported by our parent community and we are grateful.

—Mary Burchenal  
English Department Chair

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## News from B-CASA and B-PEN

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### B-CASA (Brookline Coalition Against Substance Abuse) Community Forum on Teen Smoking

The BHS November 5th Community Forum power breakfast on “Teens and Smoking” united approximately 60 BHS students, teachers, parents, and staff members as well as public health and community leaders toward the goal of preventing teen smoking. Building on BHS Peer Leader’s campaign, “Class of 2013 Kicks Butts,” the forum brainstormed ways to keep Brookline teens from ever starting the dangerous habit of cigarette smoking. Data examination confirmed that teen smoking has increased at BHS since 2007, and Shari Sprong, of the Health Resources Institute, offered a brief presentation on a variety of ways other communities have counteracted the trend, ranging from education and social norms campaigns to advertising restrictions and limiting access to tobacco through increased taxes or raising the legal age of purchase. Round-table discussions that followed up the presentation looked at a variety of strategies. One group, lead by BHS Peer Leaders, focused

on targeting the school’s youngest students, urging them not to start smoking through a multiple media campaign. Other groups discussed school policy (smoking in front of the school) and community strategies for discouraging smoking. If you would like to participate in a follow-up subcommittee on teens and tobacco, please contact Mary Minott at 617-713-5155 or [mary\\_minott@town.brookline.ma.us](mailto:mary_minott@town.brookline.ma.us).

### Special Newsletter on “Teens And Smoking”

B-CASA’s latest Parent Resource Network Newsletter is a special issue on “Teens and Smoking.” Find out what students say and what experts advise, with a printable Tip Sheet for talking to your teen about smoking. Visit [www.Bcasa.org](http://www.Bcasa.org) to check out this and other informative newsletters.

### News From B-PEN (Brookline Parent Education Network)

The website for B-PEN is up and running, with lots of tip sheets and resource information as well as an interactive discussion blog for parents. Current topics include the smoking policy at BHS and teen hangout hotspots in Brookline. Ask a question, offer a strategy, or join the conversation at [www.B-PEN.org](http://www.B-PEN.org). And check out B-PEN’s page on Facebook. Become a fan.

B-PEN’s Parent Advisory Committee, which helps identify some of the chronic teen issues in Brookline and strategizes ways to address them, is still looking for new volunteers and/or suggestions and ideas. This month’s meeting is December 14, 2009, 7-8:30 p.m., at the home of June Harris, 51 Rawson Rd, Brookline. For more information on B-PEN, contact June Harris ([June\\_harris@brookline.k12.ma.us](mailto:June_harris@brookline.k12.ma.us)) or Karen Campbell ([Karen\\_campbell@brookline.k12.ma.us](mailto:Karen_campbell@brookline.k12.ma.us)).



### Meet the Administrators

On Wednesday, December 9, 6–7:30 p.m., Town Hall Room 103, hear directly from the new administrative leaders of special education in Brookline, ask questions, and offer comments. Get a preview of the newly developed policies and procedures manual for special education. Learn about “Landmark at Lawrence.”

### SEPAC Open House Answers Parent Questions

BHS SEPAC’s Open House on November 10 drew a large group of parents, many of 8th grade students, providing a rare chance to hear about special education and other supports at the high school. Parents heard an overview of various programs from Headmaster Bob

Weintraub, Special Education Coordinator John Ivimey, Learning Center Coordinator Theresa Shanahan, and Sally Noteware on the Tutorial program. There was a good amount of time for discussion, and parents took full advantage, asking many thoughtful and probing questions.

For those who missed it, SEPAC’s December 9 Meet the Administrators will offer a similar chance to learn about programming district-wide from key special education administrators and to ask questions. We look forward to seeing you there.



## 2009 First Light Festival

“Discover Brookline’s Best” during the town-wide First Light Festival 2009, held this year on December 3, 5–8 p.m. The event features live music, activities, prizes, and more. Support local businesses and enjoy performances by such Brookline High School groups as the Camerata, Testostatoes, Note-a-fy, Perfect Pitch, Concert Band, and Jazz Band throughout the evening.

## School Council Election Results

Three winners were chosen in the election for School Council Parent Representatives. The representatives for the 2009–2011 academic year are Teresa Cheng, Shari Gershenfeld, and Beth Miller. They join Frank Friedman and Ieshia Brantley in representing parents on the BHS Council, a group of parents, students, and faculty who meet with the headmaster to discuss issues of school improvement and to advise on the budget. Congratulations!

## Panel Discussion on How Athletics Can Help BHS Students Get into College

On Thursday, December 3, a panel of high school coaches and Division 1 and Division 3 representatives will present to BHS students and parents regarding ways that athletic experience and proficiency can help students get into the college of their choice. The discussion begins at 7 p.m. in the MLK Room.

## Adoptive Families Together (AFT)

AFT sponsors parent-run confidential groups to share personal concerns and needs around adoptive parenting. AFT provides education, advocacy, support, and more. We also welcome adopted individuals, birth parents, foster parents, and all those with a connection to adoption. These are ongoing groups that meet once a month. Feel free to drop in.

The Brookline Group meets at the Brookline Public Library main branch, 361 Washington St., 2nd floor conference room, on the last Monday of each month from 7–8:30 p.m. Group facilitators are Matt Paluszek and Tracy Grondin. The next meeting is December 21 (1 week early due to holidays). For more information contact 617-587-1554, [www.mspcc.org](http://www.mspcc.org), or [pbrady@mspcc.org](mailto:pbrady@mspcc.org).

### IMPORTANT DATES

([link to BHS PTO calendar](#))

#### December

- 1: Freshman PTO meeting\*
- 2: Sophomore PTO meeting\*
- 3: Athletics...into College Panel
- 5: SATs
- 7: Junior PTO meeting\*
- 8: Free Kaplan SAT workshop for juniors
- 8: Senior PTO meeting\*
- 9: Early dismissal – 12:30 p.m.
- 9: Freshman SADD Meeting
- 9: *Conversazione* with Stephen Kinzer
- 9–12: *Lord of the Flies* (Freshman Play)

12: ACT

- 16: Free Kaplan SAT practice test for juniors
- 18: Winter Concert
- 23: Early dismissal – 12:00 p.m.
- 24-1/3: No school – Winter Vacation

#### January

- 7: Free Kaplan ACT workshop for juniors
- 7–8: ReVisions
- 12: Free Kaplan ACT practice test for juniors
- 12: Sophomore PTO meeting\*

13: Freshman PTO meeting\*

- 12: BETCo
- 15: Needs Improvement
- 18: No School
- 19: Junior PTO meeting\*
- 20: Senior PTO meeting\*
- 21: ATPP Kickoff party
- 21: SWS info meeting for Freshman & Sophomore parents
- 23: SATs
- 28-29: Emerson play
- 29: 2nd quarter grades close

\* See the 2009-2010 PTO Meeting Calendar for details

## PTO EXECUTIVE BOARD

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## 2009–2010 PTO MEETING CALENDAR

Meetings are held at 7:00 p.m. in the Martin Luther King Room, unless otherwise noted. For updates, check the PTO website (www.bhs-ptο.org).

### Freshmen Class of 2013

**Tuesday, 12/1**  
*Social Networking Sites,  
Time Management*

**Wednesday, 1/13**  
*Mid-Year Testing, Grading, and  
Sophomore Class Options*

**Thursday 1/21**  
*Special joint meeting for freshman & sophomore  
parents. Dan Bresman of SWS explains the program  
and application/ lottery process.*  
**Auditorium**

### Sophomores Class of 2012

**Wednesday, 12/2**  
*The Alphabet of High Stakes  
Testing:  
MCAS, PSAT, SAT II, ACT, SAT*

**Tuesday, 1/12**  
*Sex & Our Teenagers. Presentation/  
discussion by Planned Parenthood.*

### Juniors

Class of 2011

**Monday, 12/7**  
*Junior Year Stresses &  
Perspectives*

**Tuesday, 1/19**  
*Guidance Night*

**Wednesday, 3/10**  
*College Alternatives and  
Gap Year Options*

**Tuesday, 4/13**  
*College Fair*

**Wednesday, 5/19**  
*Panel of Seniors About  
Senior Year*

### Seniors

Class of 2010

**Tuesday, 12/08**  
*Presentation by B-CASA*

**Wednesday, 1/20**  
*Changing Dynamics  
in the Family*

**Tuesday, 2/10**  
*Senior Slump/the  
End of Senior Year*

**Wednesday, 3/3**  
*Choosing the Right  
College After Acceptances  
Come In*

**Monday, 4/5**

**Tuesday, 5/4**